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Yugoslavia: Trends in Ethnic Nationalism

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An Intelligence Assessment

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September 1983*

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] Office of
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**Yugoslavia: Trends in
Ethnic Nationalism**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 30 August 1983
was used in this report.*

Yugoslavia, created largely by victorious powers after World War I rather than through any internal consolidation, has never achieved the domestic legitimacy enjoyed by most Western states because of unresolved rivalries among its diverse peoples and regions. The intensity of ethnic rivalry has been increasing since the death of Josip Broz (Tito) in 1980 because the cumbersome decentralized system Tito bequeathed is beset by economic crisis—reflected in a widening gap between the prosperous north and the poorer south—and a growing perception among Yugoslav peoples that their collective leadership is inadequate. In addition, ethnic rivalries are being exacerbated by polemics in the country's lively press, the increasing tendency of religious leaders to link matters of faith with ethnic interests, and the attraction of ethnic nationalism to Yugoslavia's dissatisfied youth.

The devolution of power to the republics and provinces in recent years has strengthened the dominant nationality in each. In the process, minorities have become restive and increasingly look to either their "home" republics or their national churches for support rather than to the federal government. We believe that the resulting ethnic strains may eventually focus on fundamental issues such as how Yugoslavia is ruled.

In our judgment, the most serious of Yugoslavia's ethnic strains is the Serbs' perceived drive for restored dominance and the more or less united opposition to it by Yugoslavia's other nationalities. With federal leaders faltering, prominent Serbs are calling for recentralization of the party and the economy to reverse a decade and a half of decentralization in the federal system and, in the process, to expand Serbian authority. The non-Serbs see the proposals as a threat to their much-prized autonomy, insist on maintaining the status quo, and conspire to undermine Serbian designs. The Serbs' disadvantage is that, alone among the nationalities, they are perceived as seeking hegemony over the system, rather than—like the rest—autonomy within it.

We are monitoring four major fronts of ethnic strife:

- **Serb-Croat** animosity—the country's most critical traditional dispute—is under control but increasing in intensity. Croats staunchly uphold regional autonomy, and some nationalists even espouse outright independence from the federation.

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- In *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, long an arena of Serbian-Croatian rivalry, federal creation of a “Muslim” nationality, intended to dampen Serbian-Croatian competition for control of the republic, has instead encouraged a new “nation” to seek regional dominance.
- The situation in *Kosovo* is currently the most violence prone. Military occupation has kept the lid on since Albanian riots in 1981, but local Serbs bitterly resent pressures from Kosovo Albanians that they and Montenegrins leave Kosovo. Moreover, agitation from Albanian dissidents for an “ethnically pure” Albanian Kosovo—a model, perhaps, for Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina—has stirred up Albanian nationalism in neighboring Macedonia—where Albanians are 20 percent of the population—and in a few regions in Montenegro.
- The *Slovenes* also are becoming increasingly nationalistic. Primarily concerned with keeping their relatively privileged economic status, they want to avoid a further drain of their resources to poorer Yugoslav regions and to block Serbian efforts to recentralize power in Belgrade.

We do not see signs—such as concurrent anti-Serb demonstrations by Muslims, Croats, and Albanians—that widespread ethnic violence is imminent. The authorities probably can successfully rely on verbal attacks against nationalism in general, on selective repression of the most radical nationalists, and on the deterrent effect of the specter of intervention by the military which, with its cohesive officer corps and well-disciplined ranks, is less rent by ethnic tension than society as a whole.

Nevertheless, ethnic tensions and mutual distrust will grow, in our view, as party and government authorities quarrel over regional prerogatives and rival ethnic aspirations. In particular, the situations in Kosovo and western Macedonia are likely to stay highly volatile because the Albanian populace will probably exert greater pressure for a Kosovo republic as an ethnic homeland. In the longer run, therefore, we foresee the further intensification of ethnic strife and erosion of the central government’s legitimacy leading to more serious threats to Yugoslav stability.

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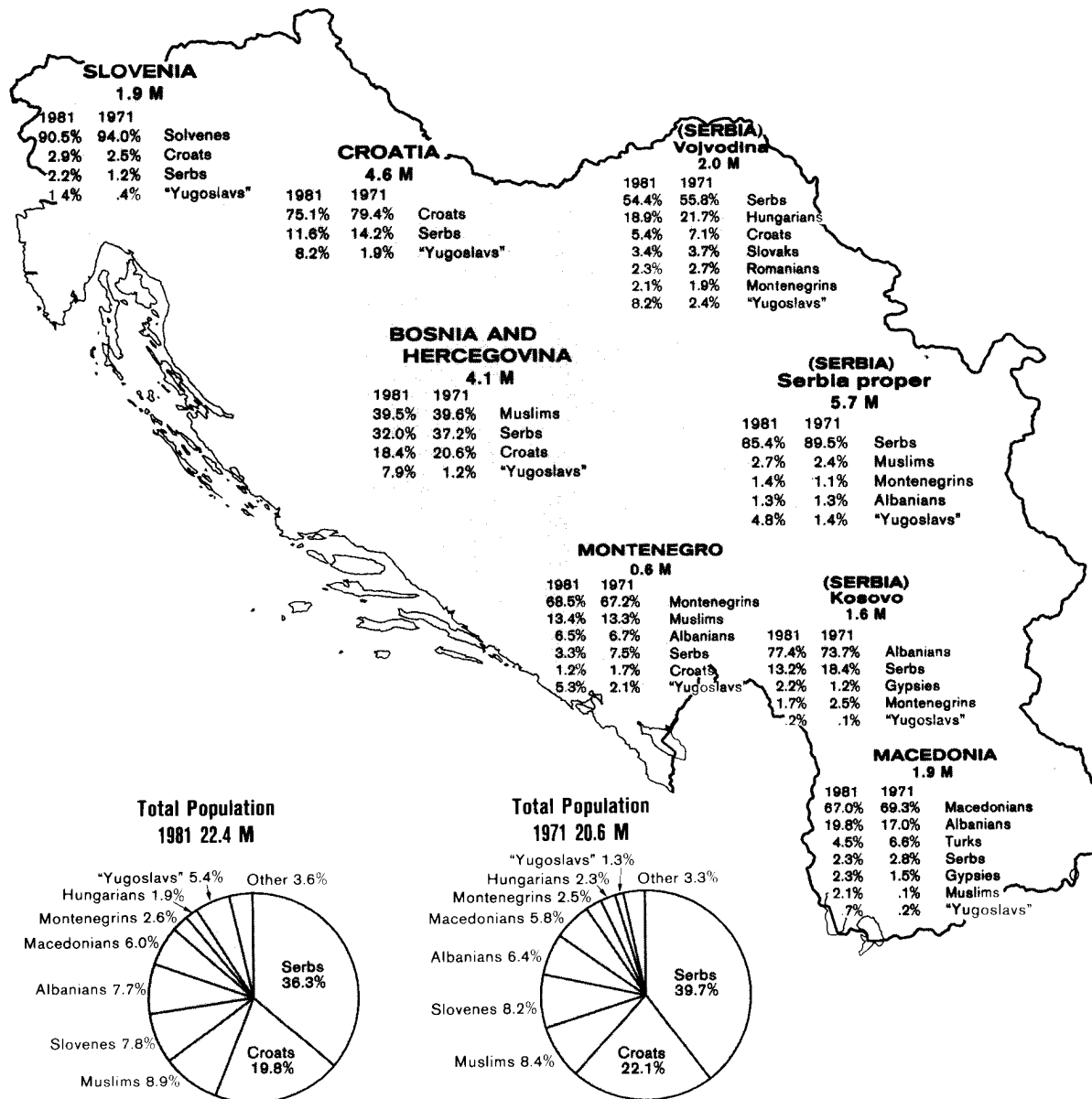
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Figure 1
Yugoslavia: Regional and Ethnic Makeup



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Yugoslavia: Trends in Ethnic Nationalism

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Introduction

Yugoslavia is a multinational state created largely by victorious foreign powers from the ashes of the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian empires after World War I. Although the Serbs are the only Yugoslav people with the number and drive to seek countrywide hegemony, their dominance has never been accepted by Croats, Albanians, and other minorities that constitute present-day Yugoslavia (see figure 1). Yugoslav ethnonational rivalries are amplified by the country's fragmented, and often adversary, economic, social, and cultural relationships. In its short history, Yugoslavia's cohesiveness has been tenuous, owing much in the post-World War II era to the personal leadership of Josip Broz (Tito):

Highpoints in Yugoslav Ethnic Problems Since 1918

1918	Yugoslavia created under Serbian dynasty.
1928	Political turmoil between ethnic groups results in assassination of Croat parliamentary leaders.
1929-30	King Alexander dissolves parliament and revokes democratic rights.
1934	Croatian nationalist assassinates Alexander in Marseilles.
1939	Prince Paul attempts to win over Croats by giving them limited autonomy. Serbs riot.
1941	Axis invasion splinters Yugoslavia. Independent Croatia fascist state, Serbian nationalists, and Communist forces begin civil war, which claims 600,000 Yugoslav lives.
1944-48	Consolidation of the Tito regime.
1968	Riots by Albanian nationalists in Macedonia and Kosovo.
1971	Tito's purge of nationalist Croatian leadership.
1972	Tito purges Serbian leadership of nationalists and liberals.
1981	Renewed rioting by Albanian nationalists in Kosovo.
1983	Trial of Muslim nationalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The post-Tito leadership is facing a resurgence of ethnic tensions signaled by major riots that broke out in Kosovo in 1981. These riots involved at least nine deaths, the arrest of hundreds of ethnic Albanians,

and provoked a military occupation of the province that continues today. They resulted in a Serbian nationalist backlash and subsequent nationalist expressions by Muslims, Albanians, and Slovenes that were caused, we believe, by non-Serbian fears of resurgent Serbian chauvinism. As a result, many Yugoslav politicians and intellectuals have recently confided privately to US Embassy officials and have even made pessimistic public statements that there may be no cure for the country's internal divisions.

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This paper assesses the factors leading to renewed ethnic tensions in the post-Tito period, describes the interplay of Yugoslavia's ethnic rivalries, and analyzes the likely impact of ethnic problems on the country's political stability.

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Reasons for Upsurge in Ethnic Nationalism

A number of developments have heightened Yugoslavia's traditionally tense ethnic rivalries since Tito's death in 1980. These include:

- The perceived political weakness of Tito's successors.
- An economic crisis that has worsened traditional north-south income differentials to the further disadvantage of Kosovo; the southern republics of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina; and southern Serbia.
- Burgeoning efforts by ethnic religious leaders to link ethnic and religious interests.
- Greater freedom for the media and cultural leaders to address controversial ethnic topics.
- Increasing disaffection among Yugoslav youth.

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The "Yugoslav" Furor

In the 1981 census, 1.2 million citizens—a modest 5 percent of the total population, but 345 percent more than in 1971—described themselves as "Yugoslavs without nationality." (Citizens could identify themselves as members of 25 ethnic minorities or as "Yugoslavs without nationality" in the 1981 census.) No adequate explanation of the phenomenon has been offered, but we doubt that it signifies any major decrease in the south Slavs' allegiance to their ethnic groups. Some Yugoslavs, rather, may have acted to protest the failure of the federal leadership to set effective policies. [redacted]

The phenomenon, in any case, caused a controversy which various spokesman have tried to dampen by explaining it away. Some official commentators offered prosaic interpretations, postulating that children of mixed marriages chose to be "Yugoslavs" or that the complicated census form caused confusion and statistical aberrations. One commentator in Bosnia hypothesized that Muslim Slavs uncomfortable with the new Islamic religious fervor in Bosnia-Herzegovina chose instead to be "Yugoslavs." [redacted]

The controversy has involved some who hope that the increase in "Yugoslavs" is leading to a more unified populace. One Serb commentator recently expressed

the hope that "Yugoslav" patriotism could become a "political unifier" of the country's ethnic mosaic, like the "melting pot" effect often attributed to Americanization of ethnic groups in the United States. Arguing to the contrary, Dusan Bilandzic, a Croat professor in Zagreb, condemned the new trend because some "Yugoslavs" favor a unitarist (Serbian) state. Several other self-appointed ethnic spokesmen hinted broadly at chicanery in compiling census data; an exceptional delay in publishing detailed census data fuels these suspicions. [redacted]

Yugoslav research on the new trend produced some results that suggest the new "Yugoslavs" are the "outs" in society. Borba, a daily which often reflects federal party policy, in March 1983 published a study which asserted that "Yugoslavs" are proportionately underrepresented in the party and that their numbers decline sharply in higher party organs. "Yugoslavs" apparently are no more "progressive" than other citizens. A study in Danas also found that, although more students claimed "Yugoslav" identity than in 1971, "Yugoslav" students declined slightly in percentage of the total student population during that period. We believe these results suggest that the new "Yugoslav" is too few in number and too far from power to wield political clout any time soon. [redacted]

Waning Central Government Control

Most important, in our view, is the perceived political weakness of Tito's successors, which has created a power vacuum. Tito developed one of the most decentralized political-economic systems in Europe, in part to deny any of Yugoslavia's nationalities cause to leave the federation. Even the party, in effect, devolved into eight autonomous units at the republican and provincial level. Although the nationality issue was never solved, the system worked because Tito periodically intervened to keep his proconsuls and their national constituencies in line. Now, with Tito dead and many of these proconsuls either dead or in eclipse, the problems inherent in the Yugoslav system are beginning to show. Polls taken by local publications and conversations between Yugoslav officials and US Embassy officers indicate that Yugoslavs lack

faith in the central government's efforts to solve the country's serious economic and social problems. Yugoslavs are looking increasingly to their ethnic leaders to get things done. [redacted]

Without Tito to orchestrate the regime, squabbles among parochial regional representatives on federal party and government organs are increasing. The collective state presidency contains one member from each republic and province, while its counterpart in the party has two members from each republic, and one each from Kosovo and Vojvodina. The Federal Assembly, which is becoming more active in Yugoslavia's legislative process, is dominated by regional

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Prime Minister Milka Planinc

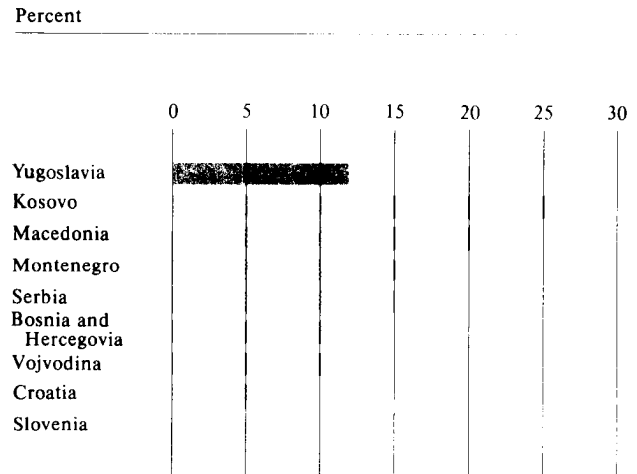
delegations openly dependent on instructions from local capitals. Only the Federal Executive Council—the country's cabinet—is more representative of technical expertise than regional political balance. As a result, perhaps, Prime Minister Milka Planinc may be the one leader popularly credited (according to recent public opinion polls and US Embassy reporting) with serving overall Yugoslav interests.

Although regional and ethnic interests are not always identical, the decentralization issue cuts across both. According to contributors to the scholarly journal *Sociologija*, decentralization has devolved power to authoritarian regional bureaucracies at the expense of grass-roots democracy. Viewed this way, the concentration of power in the six republics and two provinces has strengthened the dominant nationality in each and created centers of power to which fellow nationals in other regions can look. Minorities within a particular republic or province—Serbs in Croatia or Kosovo, for example—increasingly seek support either from their “home” republics or their national churches rather than from the federal government.

Economic Problems

The weakened collective leadership is having difficulties dealing with regional economic disparities, thus intensifying debate within ethnic communities over

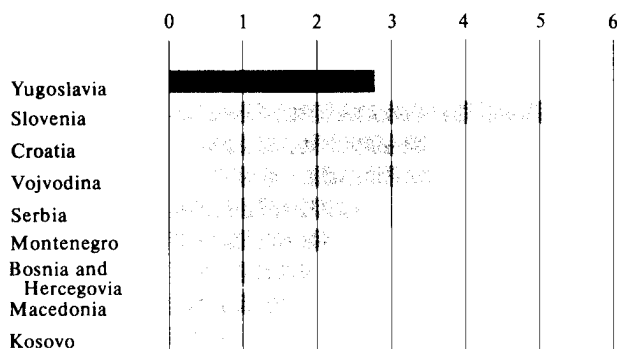
Figure 2
Yugoslavia: Unemployment, 1981



the wisdom of consensus decisionmaking (see figures 2 and 3). For instance, in 1965, Belgrade vowed to ameliorate the split between the relatively prosperous north and the poorer south by launching a federal aid program with contributions from the richer republics and Vojvodina to the poorer republics and Kosovo (see figure 4). However, since 1980, Slovenia has been trying to limit its obligations to the fund, to eliminate Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia as “underdeveloped” fund recipients, and to substitute enterprise-to-enterprise aid for federal programs. In 1983, Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, and Vojvodina did not meet their obligations to the fund and temporarily forced its bankruptcy in March. We believe that failures to fulfill commitments to the south in the future, which seem likely given the general decline of the economy, would increase the risk of nationalist outbreaks in Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina.

Figure 3
Yugoslavia: Per Capita Income, 1982

Thousand US \$



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Although the federal government recently passed laws designed to increase its economic authority, republics and provinces continue to promote autarkic, inefficient investment strategies and regional protectionism. In 1978, the US Embassy in Belgrade reported that only 3 percent of total investment moved between Yugoslavia's constituent republics and provinces and only 15 percent crossed municipal borders. Press articles complain that interrepublic trade, which fell from 28 percent of overall circulation of goods and services in 1970 to 22 percent in 1980, is continuing to decline. In addition, electric power, railroads, and other basic transport and utility industries remain controlled at the regional level. Bosnia-Hercegovina, which has complained about Yugoslav airline service, recently proposed creating its own carrier [redacted]

The Churches

Yugoslavia's three major churches are making a comeback after years of losing struggles with federal or regional party barons (see figure 5). Events outside Yugoslavia—such as the spread of Pan-Islamic ideas and the election of John Paul II, the first Pope with

experience in combating ruling Communist parties—undoubtedly contribute to this resurgence. But we believe that the more telling factor is the clergies' increasing inclination to link their churches with the political goals of their ethnic constituencies. A recent federal party conference on religion concluded that there has been "an obvious trend to identify religious affiliation with national feeling, which sometimes leads to nationalism and even to irredentism." [redacted]

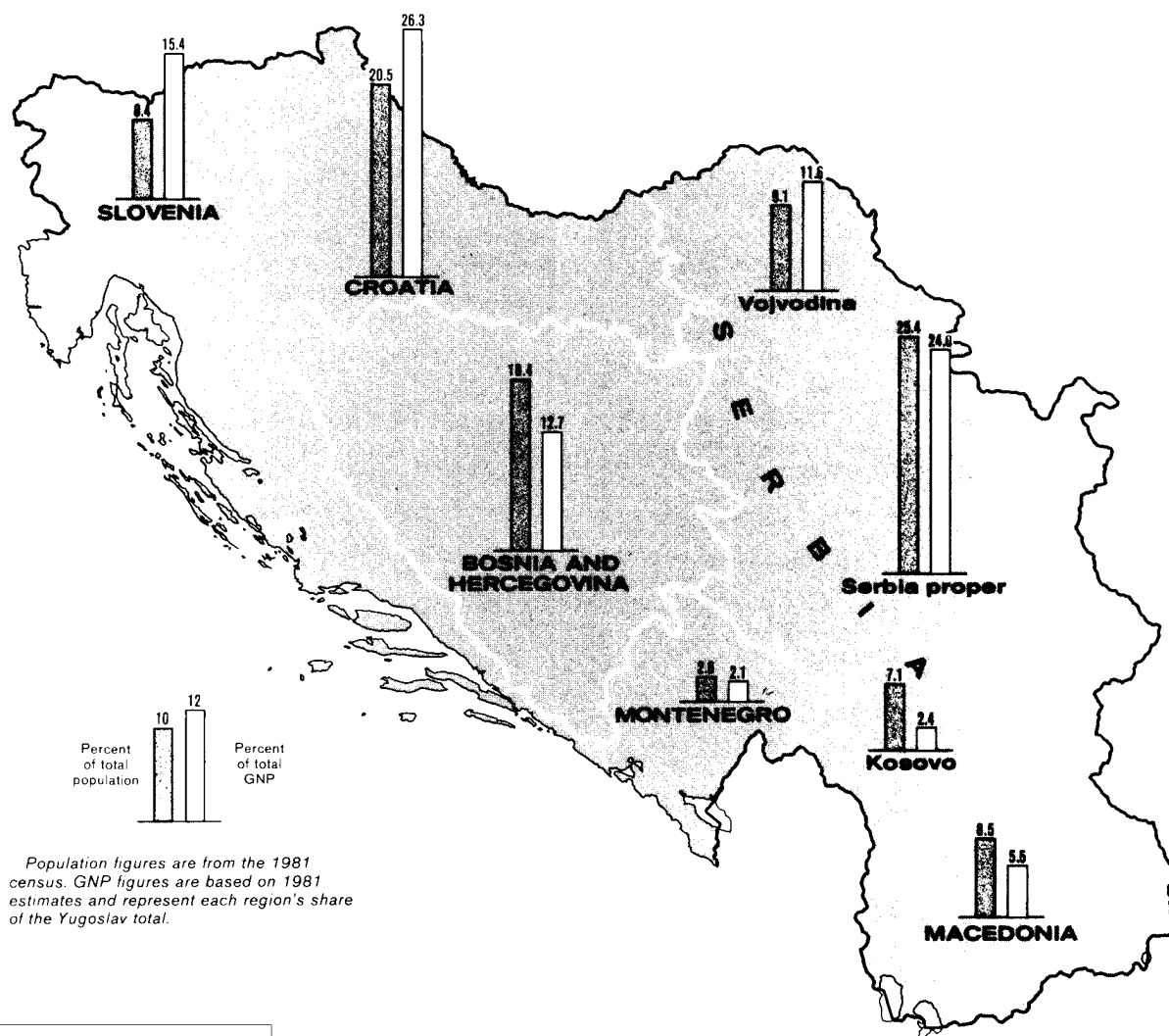
Croat Catholicism. The Catholic Church, which steadfastly holds to its claim to be the true protector of Croat nationhood, and the Yugoslav regime are old and bitter adversaries. The Church received a considerable boost in December 1982 as a result of the elevation of Zagreb Archbishop Kuharic, an avowed Croatian nationalist, to the rank of cardinal. Kuharic staunchly defended the Church from an anticlerical campaign in 1981-82 led by Jakov Blazevic, a hard-liner on the Croatian party central committee. US officials, after conversations with him, have described his views on history as containing "scarcely concealed anti-Serb sentiments." [redacted]

[redacted] The Croatian government has publicly admonished Kuharic to behave responsibly in his new office. [redacted]

Serbian Orthodoxy. The principal church of the Serbian nation is also enjoying a modest reinvigoration. Patriarch German, in conversations with US officials, has mentioned frustrations with the political system as the main cause, but Yugoslav officials say that nationalist activism among the clergy is also responsible. Church leaders, for example, have been particularly vocal in condemning Albanian excesses in Kosovo, and they also stress their concern for Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. A measure of the Serbian church's successes in capitalizing on the linkage between religious belief and national feeling is the steady increase in Serbian minisepts, which rededicate themselves to Orthodox fundamentals and traditional Serbian culture. [redacted]

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Figure 4
Yugoslavia: Relative Population and Wealth by Republic



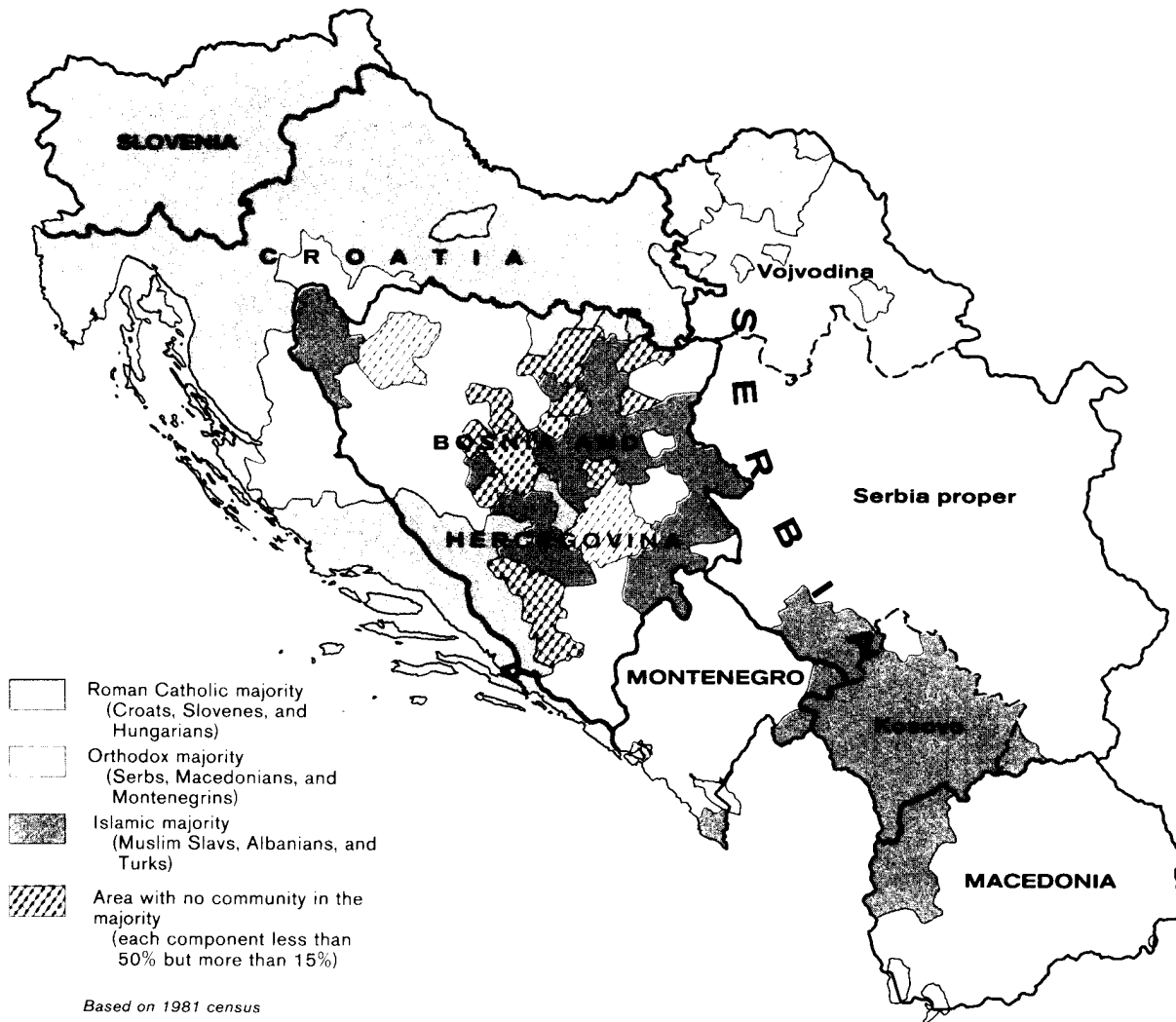
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Figure 5
Yugoslavia: Historical Religious Communities



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To some non-Serbs, the Serbian church's reviving role is seen as the dangerous manifestation of Serbian chauvinism. Orthodoxy in Yugoslavia is, for example, a major arena for rivalry between the Serbs and the Macedonians—Macedonia was called Southern Serbia between the world wars. The Macedonian Orthodox clergy split with the Serbian Orthodox church,

establishing an autonomous Macedonian church in 1959 and a completely independent church in 1967. Some Serbs rioted against the new church, and the Serbian Orthodox hierarchy refused to recognize it.

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This split between the Serbian and the Macedonian Orthodox has lent itself to regime manipulation to keep the Serbian church in its place, but at the cost of perpetuating tensions between Serbs and Macedonians. Federal authorities quickly recognized first the autonomous and then the independent Macedonian church. In March 1983 the federal government further irritated Serbs by appointing a Macedonian priest to head the government-sponsored Federation of Yugoslav Priests. Government officials have recently repeated calls for Serbian recognition of Macedonian Orthodox autocephalicity. []

Islam. Islam in Yugoslavia has played an important role in a broader Muslim reawakening. Benefiting from the benign neglect of the authorities over the past decade, Muslims have tried to establish an identity between Islamic belief and political movements that work against the interests of the Yugoslav federation. The Islamic clergy is upgrading religious instruction and has established many ties with Islamic communities abroad. More than 150 Yugoslav Muslims pursue Islamic studies in the Middle East each year, and there are an unknown number of foreign students in Yugoslav *medresa*.¹ Some of these foreign students, according to recent accusations by a top leader in Sarajevo, serve as links to radical "Muslim brotherhoods" in the Middle East. []

Yugoslav authorities have been slow to react to the warning signals of growing Muslim assertiveness, probably in part because of Yugoslavia's close ties with the Third World Islamic states. However, a recent flurry of official attacks on Muslim nationalists may well presage the end of favored treatment for Islam in Yugoslavia. Two Islamic clergymen were among the Muslim nationalists arrested this spring for advocating Muslim separatism, and public attacks on foreign-based Islamic revolutionaries are on the rise. We believe that the primary impact of any crackdown would be felt in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where rival Catholic and Serbian clergy will see opportunities to use the issue of Muslim-Islamic nationalism for their own advantage. []

¹ *Medresa* are institutions for higher Islamic education and are located in Sarajevo, Pristina, and Skopje. []

The Media and Cultural Expression

Since Tito's death in 1980, journalists, writers, and dramatists have enjoyed new freedoms to broach themes once held too controversial for public consumption. Because editorial decisions are usually made in regional capitals, the new themes often counterpose local ethnic interests with those of rival regions and nationalities. After the Kosovo riots, for example, Serbia's press charged that the militia in Kosovo aided Albanians while oppressing Serbs and Montenegrins. Pristina papers denied the charges and accused the Belgrade press of Serbian chauvinism. Federal authorities seem powerless to stop such polemics, despite their repeated warnings against journalistic irresponsibility. []

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Writers and playwrights also are contributing to heightened ethnic tensions. For example, the play *Golbunjaca (Pigeon Pit)*, dealing with wartime atrocities committed against Serbs by Croats, created such a controversy last fall and winter that the director of the Serb National Theater in Novi Sad was fired because he allowed it to be performed. Yet the play has since been produced in several Serbian and Slovenian cities. A best-selling novel, *Knife*, recently published in Belgrade, graphically details Muslim murders of Serbs (see inset). The book also postulates that Muslim war criminals have infiltrated the present power structure in Bosnia and are biding their time until another round against the Serbs. []

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The federal party has closed several small publishing houses, and there have been personnel changes at *Danas*, *Politika*, and some smaller papers. But two consecutive central committee plenums in February and March failed to agree on a tougher information and cultural policy, and the US Embassy does not believe that a major media purge is in the offing. The party's failure to stop the advertisement of ethnic disputes in the media demonstrates its general inability to reach difficult decisions on divisive issues. []

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From Knife by Vuk Draskovic

In 1831 Sultan Mahmut ordered Namlik Pasha, the Bosnian vezir, to lower taxes for Christians and allow them to rebuild their destroyed churches. The vezir summoned all Muslim leaders to Travnik and ordered them to observe the Sultan's wishes. Five begs from Hercegovina accepted the new decrees. The rest, from Bosnia, rebelled and recruited forces to fight the Sultan. The Bosnian Muslims considered the new decrees an attack on Islam and a concession to infidels. They called up a large army to move against the Hercegovinian begs who remained loyal to Istanbul. [redacted]

The Hercegovinian forces were much weaker, for each of them twenty rebels were in the field. Turhan-beg led the Bosnians into battle waving his saber, with the cry "Brother Turks, spill the blood of the Serbs! All are infidels! Forward my falcons! Who dies in battle with unbelievers enters heaven. Forward for Mohamed's faith!" [redacted]

Hasan-beg of Trebinje, leader of the Hercegovinian forces, raised them by appealing to the Serbs. He called them to battle with the cry "My people, brothers, and falcons! Forward for the Holy Cross and Saint John!" If he had not done so, the battle was

lost. As it turned out, confusion spread in the ranks of Bosnian rebels and both flanks retreated in the belief the other had left the field. A general rout followed, with total victory for the Hercegovinians. [redacted]

One of the victorious begs, Ali-Aga from Stolac, who kissed the cross and rushed into battle with it in his hand, was later rewarded by promotion to vezir. All of the Christians in Hercegovina assembled in Mostar to honor his appointment and to recognize him as their benefactor and savior. [redacted]

On the same day of this ceremony, Ali-Aga ordered four Serbs executed. They were impaled alive and hung in agony for three days cursing the faith of Mohamed. From then on Ali-Aga loosed a rein of terror against the Serbs. He ordered that the walls of his palace in Mostar be decorated with Serbian heads so that from any position, even reclining, he could see them. He took special pleasure in witnessing executions during meals. During his twenty-year rule, a day never passed without at least a hundred and fifty Serb heads hanging on his palace walls, with their eyes turned toward his quarters. [redacted]

Youth

We believe that the declining employment prospects—at present about 75 percent of the country's 900,000 unemployed are under 30 and looking for their first job—are increasing the attraction of nationalism as a form of antiestablishment behavior among Yugoslav youth, especially the university trained. Moreover, the government now projects that economic austerity will continue through 1989, probably ensuring that youth unemployment will be virtually unsolvable until then. Young persons' identification with the system through entree into and mobility up through the political bureaucracy also offers little hope because those in place are loath to give way. [redacted]

Branko Mikulic, the Bosnian leader, has expressed what we believe is a growing fear among Yugoslav leaders: the younger generation is more loyal to

ethnic, material, and religious values rather than to Yugoslav and socialist ones. Albanian young people—52 percent of Kosovo's population is under age 19—were the principal participants in the 1981 riots and subsequent agitations. Since then, Croatian students, some overtly sympathetic to the Kosovars, increasingly have sparked nationalist disturbances at basketball games and in medical faculties and dormitories at Croat universities; Jure Bilic, then president of the Croatian party presidium, complained in December 1982 of a "nationalist mosaic" among Croatian youth. Kosovar and Croatian nationalism, in turn, have

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helped to energize Serbian youth. Outraged officials protest crude posters in Serbian schools that encourage students to "make a check if you hate Albanians" and the fashion among Serbian youths to wear caps in the style of chetniks (World War II Serbian anti-Communists). [REDACTED]

Yugoslav officials have reacted to the youth problem by increasing pressures on educators. Hamdija Pozderac, Bosnia's party president, recently claimed that some local schools add to the problem by segregating students according to national origin. The Bosnia-Herzegovina party central committee, meanwhile, has complained that curriculums foster "the nationalist point of view." In Kosovo, 200 out of 480 people fired from their jobs in the first three months after the riots were teachers. The Communist organization of the University of Pristina in Kosovo in January 1983 called for even greater purges. [REDACTED]



Dragoslav Markovic, president of League of Communists of Yugoslavia

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The Main Rivalries

Declining federal authority, troublesome economic disparity, and a more vocal press are, in our view, renewing the scramble for power among ethnic groups harboring deep-seated suspicions of out-group goals and motivations. We believe that competition between Serbs and non-Serbs is the key factor in this new wave of ethnic nationalism. Serbs claim they are on the defensive, attempting only to protect the Yugoslav federation and their constitutional authority in their autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. According to Yugoslav press commentators, however, many non-Serbs believe that the Serbs want to restore their position of preeminence throughout the country. Non-Serbs, through press commentary and in Federal Assembly debates, express their determination to protect their constitutional autonomy. [REDACTED]

victors who were grateful for the Serbs' role in World War I rather than as a consequence of internal political or military victories. [REDACTED]

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The historical distrust between Serbs and non-Serbs has divisive repercussions in the party leadership. According to press reports, in June 1982 non-Serbs unsuccessfully tried to block the elevation of Dragoslav Markovic, a Serb leader known for his nationalist sentiments, as Serbia's representative on the party presidium. In June 1983 Markovic became president of the party after Serbia nominated him to serve the one-year rotational term. [REDACTED]

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Markovic, in fact, has been consistently pressing for proposals that would, in effect, restore some of Serbia's lost preeminence. During the mid-1970s, for example, he tried to recentralize control over the Kosovo and Vojvodina provinces and was blocked only by Tito. And prior to last year's party congress, Serbia's leaders, including Markovic, made sweeping

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The Serbs' Special Position

Alone among the nationalities, the Serbs are perceived to seek hegemony over the system rather than the less difficult goal of autonomy within it. Even at its height before World War II, Serb dominance was contested fiercely. Serbian vulnerability as Yugoslavia's dominant ethnic group stems from its taking charge as a result of decisions in 1919 by Allied

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proposals for strengthening controls over the regional parties by the federal party, in which the Serbs are the largest bloc. Serbs were blocked by other delegations but, despite the rebuff, a parliamentary commission has been studying recentralizing reforms at Serbia's insistence. Judging from his speeches at recent Central Committee plenums, Markovic is a leading backer of efforts to restore economic decision making to the federal government, a move opponents criticize as presaging political recentralization, a prerequisite to renewed Serb hegemony. [REDACTED]

In our judgment, the Serbian leadership's drive for more power is not likely to wane because the political strength of nationalism in Serbia is so strong that most top Serbian leaders have to accommodate to it. Judging from their speeches and from US Embassy reporting, Markovic and his chief rival, Nikola Ljubicic, a former Defense Minister who is now president of Serbia, compete with each other for legitimacy as defenders of Serbian rights. And, as in other republics, Serbian officials with reputations for a broader "Yugoslav," rather than local political orientations—like former Foreign Minister Milos Minic—have been pushed by their home constituencies to the political sidelines. [REDACTED]

An issue that Serbian leaders have tried to capitalize on to justify their drive for more power is the current dispute with Albanian leaders over the emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo. Most Serbs revere Kosovo, the heart of the ancient Serbian empire and site of its religious monuments, as their national birthplace. Yugoslav officials have told US diplomats that between 15,000 and 20,000—about 10 percent—of the province's Serbs and Montenegrins left under duress between 1981 and October 1982. In June, *Politika* reported that, on average, 400 Serbs and Montenegrins leave each month. In July, the party daily *Borba* reported a Serbian complaint that emigration has spread to areas of southern Serbia bordering Kosovo. Serbian leaders, as well as Montenegrin and Macedonian officials, blame the exodus on pressure by Albanian nationalists who want to create an ethnically pure Kosovo as a step toward secession and reunion with Albania. [REDACTED]



*Milutin Baltic, president of
Croatian state presidency*

The Serb-Croat Rivalry

While Serbian assertiveness remains the focus for current ethnic tensions, and while Kosovo remains the most volatile area, we believe that Croatian opposition to Serbian hegemony remains the most potentially dangerous of the country's ethnic rivalries. While leading Serbs seek to gain preeminence over the Yugoslav state, the Croats, who are the Serbs' staunchest opponents, have always had some leaders who espoused secession from the federation. [REDACTED]

There is a long legacy of Serbian mistrust of the Croats, who during World War II established an independent state under German protection. This legacy was reinforced by years of nationalistic policies pursued by Croatian republican leaders who were ousted in a major purge in 1971. Arrests associated with this so-called Croatian mass movement continued for a decade, and the Croatian nationalist cause, despite harsh suppression by the federal leadership, is very much alive. In 1980, many leading Croats signed petitions for the release of their political prisoners.

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Dusan Dragosavac, member of the presidium of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

Eastfoto ©



Adm. Branko Mamula, Defense Minister

Camera Press ©

The next spring, the US Consulate in Zagreb reported receiving a manifesto calling for Croatian independence from an underground "Croatian Communist party." [redacted]

The Croatian leadership, which has rigorously suppressed Croatian nationalism, is now alarmed that Serbian agitation will strengthen anti-Serb sentiments and undermine its position. Croatian officials have expressed concern at the increasing incidence of nationalist expression at Croatian universities, sometimes in open support of Albanian opposition to Serbian policies in Kosovo. Stipe Suvar, an influential Croat theoretician, recently noted that all other Yugoslav nationalists "hate the Serbs," and he warned that the problem could increase because Serbs are nostalgic for their pre-1941 position. Milutin Baltic, the new president of the Croatian state presidency, warned in May that Serbia's strong response to problems in Kosovo could incite other nationalisms in response. [redacted]

Croatian animosity toward Serbs also has a local focus in a perception that the Serb minority in Croatia—living primarily in southwestern and eastern Croatia—is favored politically. The authorities in Zagreb have often admitted that Croatian resentment

of the disproportionate numbers of Serbs in the republican leadership—a residual impact of their greater role as Communist partisans during the war—is a special sore point among Croats. Serbs are heavily represented in the current leadership; Baltic, Dusan Dragosavac, one of the republic's two representatives on the federal party presidium, and Adm. Branko Mamula, Defense Minister, are all Croatian Serbs. [redacted]

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There is also a strong emigre activity which keeps Croatian nationalism simmering. Nationalist Croatian emigres in Western Europe and the United States are the most active among anti-Yugoslav groups abroad, with most dedicated to restoring an independent Croatian state encompassing boundaries greater than even the 1941-45 wartime puppet state of Croatia. Croatian nationalists, both in Yugoslavia and outside, still claim that Bosnia-Herzegovina is an integral part of the Croatian homeland. Small radical groups have taken the terrorist road. More disturbing to the Yugoslav leadership is the current trend of Croatian emigres to join forces with Albanian counterparts in Western Europe to protest Yugoslav human rights violations and policies in Kosovo. [redacted]

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Muslim Nationalism

Serb-Croat rivalry helped produce the growing strain of Muslim nationalism in current Yugoslav ethnic tensions. For hundreds of years, Serbs and Croats both have claimed the "hearts and minds" of the majority of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the descendants of ethnic Serbs and Croats who converted to Islam during the 500 years of Turkish rule. Ancient hatreds were reinforced during World War II when many Bosnian Muslims sided with the Croats and participated in exterminating Serbs. Yugoslav officials and press observers have noted that to this day Croats and Muslims generally maintain better relations with each other than do Serbs with either group. Federal officials tried to defuse this rivalry before the 1971 census by setting the "Muslims" legally apart as a separate nationality. The move only complicated Yugoslavia's national problems, however, by creating yet another claimant to national self-determination.



Raif Dizdarevic, former president of the Federal Assembly

The Muslims are pressing to expand their influence as the plurality in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their current aggressiveness probably is based on resentment of past overrepresentation of Serbs in the institutions of power, somewhat similar to the situation in Croatia. According to 1971 figures, Serbs, who then constituted 37 percent of the population, made up 47 percent of party membership. The US Embassy in Belgrade reports that an unwritten rule requires that the party presidency still be made up of three Serbs, three Muslims, and two Croats despite declines in the Serb population in the republic.

As evidence of their nationalism, the Yugoslav press reports that Muslim officials from Bosnia-Herzegovina increasingly court Muslim communities in Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo (see figure 1). In October 1982, for example, Raif Dizdarevic, then president of the Federal Assembly and a leading Bosnian Muslim, visited Kosovo—where the majority Albanians are of Islamic religious extraction—and returned with a report defending Kosovar treatment of Serbs and Montenegrins in the province. He was attacked by Serbian officials, and his report was ignored in a subsequent Assembly resolution, which generally blamed Kosovar pressure for Serb and Montenegrin emigration.

The Muslims' growing assertiveness has alarmed some federal leaders, particularly as evidence has grown that some Muslims sympathize with the Iranian revolution. As early as 1979, a Sarajevo official claimed that Ayatollah Khomeini had significant influence in the republic. On 22 March 1983 Branko Mikulic, then president of the republic presidency, attacked "pan-Islamism;" the US Embassy in Belgrade reported that this was the first statement on the problem by a Bosnian leader in recent memory. In April, Interior Minister Dolanc told US officials that Muslim nationalists who were arrested on 8 April after a trip to Teheran were supportive of Khomeini's goal of establishing a Muslim state in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an Islamic toehold in Europe.

The Albanians

The Albanians are Yugoslavia's most volatile ethnic community, their most violent outbreak being the 1981 riots in Kosovo, where they are the dominant majority. In addition, they make up 20 percent of the population of Macedonia—concentrated in western Macedonia—and a growing minority in Montenegro.

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We believe that the Albanians are deeply influenced by a sense of wrongful separation from their conationals beyond the Yugoslav border. While under Italian occupation during World War II, Albania annexed Kosovo, a development previously supported by Yugoslav Communist Party declarations in 1928 and 1940. But Kosovar hopes for permanent union with Albania were dashed when Tito broke with Stalin in 1948—Albania remained a loyal Soviet ally, and Tito was forced to abandon his designs for a Yugoslav-dominated Balkan federation that allowed for a “Greater Albania” component state. Over time, agitation for union with Albania has declined in favor of demands for a separate Yugoslav Kosovo republic, judging from dissident slogans and comments by Yugoslav officials. []

The riots in 1981 and subsequent nationalist sloganeering were only the most recent demonstrations of Albanian discontent. The Albanians in Kosovo have resisted Belgrade’s attempts to coerce them or to court them with economic subsidies throughout the postwar period. Rebelling during the Communist takeover, they were suppressed by the army until the late 1940s and subsequently kept on a tight leash by Alexander Rankovic, Tito’s vice-president and Yugoslavia’s principal standard-bearer of Serbian interests. After Rankovic’s ouster in 1966, economic aid to the region increased, but it failed to avert serious rioting two years later. In 1974, in part to diffuse this discontent, Kosovo’s status was upgraded in the constitution from autonomous region to province. Nonetheless, between 1974 and 1981, 600 ethnic Albanians were arrested for nationalist and irredentist activity. []

Tensions have remained high since 1981, although the military occupation has prevented renewed widespread violence. Belgrade tried blaming the provincial party, firing its leader, Mahmut Bakali, and purging local party organizations, particularly the faculty at the University of Pristina. But nothing Belgrade has done has halted clandestine circulation of slogans, such as “Kosovo-Republic” and “Death to Serbian Bloodsuckers,” cemetery desecrations, and nationalist excesses, including rapes of Serbian women by Albanians. []

The Slovenes

The Slovenes bear no legacy of bitter struggles for independence from Yugoslavia’s other ethnic groups, and Slovene leaders support a federation that ensures their access to markets and raw materials in the south. Nevertheless, their relative prosperity is now the cause of a widening rift with other regions and ethnic groups. Slovene leaders, seeking to protect their prosperity, are among the most outspoken opponents to increasing Belgrade’s economic authority. []

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Statements by the republic’s leaders illustrate that they are not in sympathy with other Yugoslavs’ problems. Andrej Marinc, president of the party presidium, recently extolled Slovene economic superiority, crediting it to superior cadre and farsighted economic strategies. Other Slovenes have proudly pointed out the contrast between Slovenia’s energy surplus and the difficulties faced in Macedonia and elsewhere. Top Slovene party officials have argued that other Yugoslav regions should correct their mismanagement practices before seeking relief in federal subsidies, a position that has led to sharp rebuttal from leaders in less developed republics. Kosovars complain that Slovenia acts like an “imperial power” by exploiting Kosovo’s resources, paying less than world market prices for raw materials, and charging high prices for its industrial products. []

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The Slovenes also are becoming less tolerant of “guestworkers” whose growing presence is diluting the once homogenous ethnic environment. Migration of outsiders seeking work in Slovenia is creating interethnic tensions similar to those in West European countries. Guestworkers complain of discrimination, while Slovenes begrudge the increased costs of social insurance and the wages these workers send home. []

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[] Slovenia’s current five-year plan proposes changes that would decrease the republic’s need for non-Slovene labor by stressing high technology, a policy that deliberately works against the federation’s ability to increase employment in its less developed regions. []

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Outlook

Although Yugoslavia's ethnic disputes show every prospect of increasing in intensity, we do not expect immediate, widespread ethnic violence. Because regional officials—who largely support autonomy, not independence, and fear that extremism could lead to another civil war—increasingly speak out for ethnic aspirations, radicals lack the issues with which they might seize the initiative and provoke confrontations.

Moreover, in our view, the ultimate prospect of harsh suppression—perhaps by the military—will deter the public from responding to the most radical nationalists, except perhaps in Kosovo. We believe that the Yugoslav military, despite a predominance of Serbian officers, is less affected by ethnic tension than society as a whole. According to the US Defense Attache in Belgrade, 95 percent of the country's military officers are members of the party. Although there has been at least one trial of ethnic Albanian recruits who were involved in nationalist activity, there is no evidence of major ethnic problems in the military as a whole or among the occupation forces in Kosovo. We would expect the military's discipline—a characteristic not evident in the party and other Yugoslav institutions—to enable it to overcome any internal ethnic problems in the event it was called on again to intervene to preserve order.

In addition, many Yugoslavs have expressed the fear that a breakdown of order could make the country vulnerable to Soviet political intervention or political manipulation. There is no evidence of Soviet interference in Yugoslavia's ethnic disputes. Nevertheless, in our view, the memory of the break with Stalin and general acceptance of the notion that the Soviet Union is Yugoslavia's primary potential military threat currently helps restrain the centrifugal sentiments of many who might otherwise have little stake in the federation.

As academic observers have pointed out, however, Yugoslavia's post-Tito system is prone to indecision. We expect the country's leaders will attempt to "muddle through" their ethnic difficulties, making only those ad hoc decisions absolutely necessary to preserve the country's immediate stability. In the

short run, the party will probably continue its reliance on verbal attacks on nationalism and on selective repression of the most radical nationalists. The Socialist Alliance—the party's mass front organization—is likely to intensify its campaign to propagate popular opposition to nationalist excesses.

This strategy, in our view, may work for a while because most dissidents—many Albanians and some Croats providing notable exceptions—accept the need for confederation. For now, ethnic leaders are likely to restrain their demands within the existing political system, hoping to take advantage of the post-Tito leadership's weaknesses to increase personal followings.

Nevertheless, ethnic tensions and mutual distrust will grow as party and government authorities quarrel over regional prerogatives and rival ethnic aspirations. The party, fractured along ethnic lines, is especially unlikely to serve a unifying role when important issues divide Yugoslav ethnic groups. In particular, we believe that the central rivalry between Serb and non-Serb will continue to weaken Yugoslav stability for the foreseeable future. A major indicator of the seriousness of this trend will be the extent to which measures to strengthen federal prerogatives are actually implemented in the face of near-certain opposition of Croats, Slovenes, Kosovars, and Bosnian Muslims.

The situation in Kosovo and western Macedonia is likely to stay highly volatile because postriot suppression has driven an even deeper wedge between the Albanian populace and the local political elite. The Kosovo party's ability to control or co-opt Albanian nationalism is diminished because it is now particularly seen as representing outside—chiefly Serbian—interests.

We believe that pressure for republican status in Kosovo will continue to grow; the Albanian birth-rate—the highest in Europe—coupled with continuing Serbian and Montenegrin emigration, is rapidly creating an overwhelmingly Albanian province. In addition, we believe that this could increase common anti-Serb interest between Kosovar and Muslim. Any

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indication of common organization among these groups would be perceived by federal authorities—and especially by Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians—as a major threat to Yugoslav stability and probably would be dealt with harshly. []

Although we believe that ethnic discontent can be contained for now, the Yugoslav situation is and will remain unstable. Certain developments would indicate more acute ethnic discontent than we currently foresee in the short run. In descending order of likelihood, these would be:

- Renewed demonstrations in Kosovo.
- Drastic economic deterioration in the south, creating severe shortages that give radical nationalists more influence in Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or southern Serbia.
- Collapse of the economic stabilization program leading to dramatic loss of confidence in the federal government.
- Evidence, such as ad hoc demonstrations or wildcat strikes, that grass-roots agitation, led by disaffected youth, is slipping from the control of present ethnic leaders.
- Joint anti-Serb demonstrations by combinations of Croats, Muslims, and Albanians inside Yugoslavia.
- A stronger Serbian backlash against anti-Serb agitation, perhaps including calls for military intervention to maintain order. []

In the longer run, we believe that the stresses of ethnic tensions, combined with north-south economic differences, ethnic argument in the media, and disaffected youth could present the regime with overwhelming challenges to the existing system. In particular, we believe that youth—with encouragement from the Churches—probably will continue to turn away from socialism and toward nationalism. The resulting decline in the regime's legitimacy, especially if combined with inability to restructure adequately the country's inefficient political and economic institutions, could eventually deliver shocks to the system greater even than the 1981 Kosovo riots. In sum, although the leadership may "muddle through" its immediate ethnic challenges, ethnic problems will continue to grow. Yugoslavia's long-term stability is likely to depend on the relationship between its endemic ethnic disputes, fragile economic prospects, and cumbersome, decentralized political structures. []

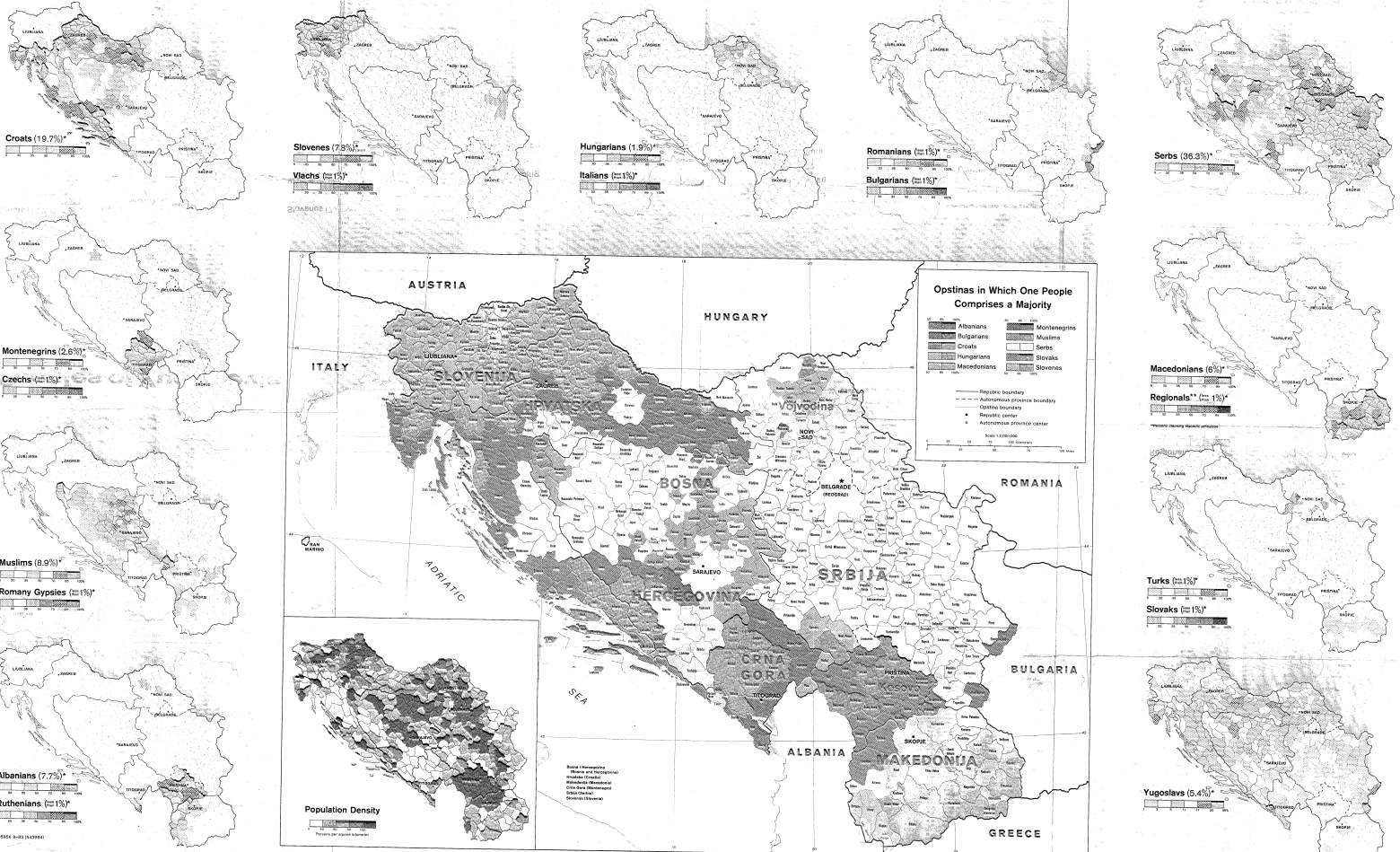
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Peoples of Yugoslavia Distribution by Opstina, 1981 Census



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